

SERIOUS
CONSIDERATIONS
ON 1/343. m. 33.
PLAYS, GAMES,
AND OTHER
FASHIONABLE DIVERSIONS.

SHEWING THE
SINFULNESS,
AND
DANGEROUS TENDENCY
THEREOF.

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SURR.

GUILDFORD:

Printed for the AUTHOR, by CHARLES MARTIN,
and Sold by HIM; and J. COOK of Farnham, by
BENJ. DOD and Co. at the Bible and Key, in Ave-
Mary-Lane, near Pater-Noster-Row; Messrs.
WILSON and FELL in Pater-Noster-Row, London;
as also by other Booksellers in Town and
Country. MDCCLXIII.

[Price SIX-PENCE.]

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Serious Considerations, &c.

In the first Part of this Work I shall consider the Folly and Sin of the common Plays, Games and Diversions of the Age.

And, In the second Part, how far the due Government of a Christian Church is concerned, in Relation to those that follow such Vanities.

FIRST, I shall consider the Folly and Sinfulness of the common Plays, Games, and Pastimes, of the present Age. That these Plays, Games, and Pastimes, are really sinful, appears by the Consequences resulting from them; namely, their corrupting Youth and others, by leading them into wrong Company and evil Habits:

They manifestly take up the Time which Christians should improve to their Growth in Knowledge and Virtue; and they have a natural Tendency to lead Persons from useful Industry for the Benefit of themselves, and their Families, and for other good Uses to Society, civil and religious.

By such Pastimes Persons are often led to the Neglect of Duty to GOD, themselves, and their Neighbour, which often end in the Ruin of their

Souls: And many Times bring themselves and their Families to Want and Poverty; and, according to St. Paul, make them worse than an Infidel; as we read, *1 Tim. v. 8. But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.*

And though Persons who give Way to these Things, may think them harmless; yet they often grow to such Extremes as issue in utter Ruin to Soul and Body; of which, we have many Instances constantly before our Eyes.

Now Practices that are often attended with such dreadful Consequences, if they are not Folly in a high Degree, and sinful too, I would ask what are? Our Saviour says, *Matt. vii. 13. Enter ye in at the strait Gate, for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.* And is it not plain, that those Pastimes are the Broad-way, in which the World travels? So that I apprehend, without saying any Thing more; it appears from hence, that those Pastimes are evidently sinful; and that Christian Professors should give no Countenance to such hurtful Vices.

But some may plead, that there is no Harm in sometimes amusing ourselves with those Things; to which, I answer: Suppose then we should allow ourselves to play at Cards, and say there is no Harm in it; other Persons may play at more publick Games, for Instance, at Bowling of different Kinds, and will excuse themselves by pleading, that we play at Cards; and from them others may plead Excuse for such Sort of Games as they like, and say ours are

are not worse than Cards, Bowling, &c. And thus may one excuse himself by what another doeth; and so one after another may run into all the vain Follies and Pastimes of the Age; such as Cudgel-playing, Horse-racing, Bull-baiting, Cock-fighting, and also Plays, Operas, and many other kinds of silly Shews, which if Christians act in, or are seen amongst, may it not be said, "What do they more or better than others?"

Playing at Cards may be thought by some, one of the least of those Vices; but let it be considered, that Vices as well as Virtues have their Beginnings; and this seems to be one of the first Introductions to Gaming, which is commonly begun in the early Days of Youth; and when young Persons are once allowed and encouraged in this Sort, it many Times grows to a ruinous Habit, and commonly leads to a favourable Opinion of other Sorts of Games; and when Youth are once entered, it is not easy to know where they will end, but may proceed from one Step to another, and follow one Sort of Game after another, to their utter Ruin: and what Numbers of Hours (to say the least of it) are trifled away in Tattling over Spots and Figures, to the Neglect of useful and valuable Improvements! Is it not plain from hence, that these pretended innocent Amusements are the Beginning of evil Habits, tending to the Encouragement of Vanity and Corruption, and so ending in the Ruin of many? Now if these Things are not sinful, and greatly so too, my Understanding fails me. God knows, we can do but little towards reforming Mankind, but by all Means let us be no Instruments to corrupt and ruin them by Word or Example: for do not these

Practices naturally lead some Persons to Revelling and Banqueting: which is what St. Peter in his 1st Epistle, iv. 3. cautions the Christians against: and Revelling is one of those Vices which St. Paul says will exclude us from the Kingdom of God, *Galatians v. 21.*

But an Explanation of the Words, Revel, and Revelling, I reserve to the Conclusion of Musick and Dancing.

And thus may such small Beginnings run into all the Pastimes, Follies, and Vanities of the World, for want of attending to St Paul's Exhortation, *Rom. xii. 2* *Be not conformable to this World; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your Mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God.* Some may think we have a Sort of Encouragement to youthful Vanity in the Book of Ecclesiastes, where Solomon says, chap. xi. 9. *Rejoice O young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes: (mark the Conclusion) but know thou, that for all these Things God will bring thee into Judgment.*

The Inferences which may justly be drawn from these Premises are, that Christians professing Godliness, should give no Countenance to the ruinous Vanities of the World; no not in the smaller Degrees of them, lest by their Example any should be entered in the Way to ruin, and they themselves become Partakers of other Mens Sins. Nay, is it not a Dishonour to a Christian to be seen amongst these Pastimes, and to be gazing at them? I must say, I think it would be a Reproach to their Christian Character,

Character, as well as an Encouragement to others to do the same: and let it be remembered that the Petition of the Psalmist was, *Psalm cxix. 27. Turn away mine Eyes from beholding Vanity.* And St. Paul's Counsel to the *Thessalonians* is, *1 Thess. v. 22, 23. to abstain from all Appearance of Evil, and the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

But surely, giving any manner of Countenance to such destructive Vanities by Word or Example, which tends to lead others into those vain Practices, and which may from one Step to another, issue in their utter Ruin, both of Soul and Body, seems to argue great Defect in these two great Principles of Christian Duty, the Love of God, and our Neighbour.

But whatsoever Excuses any may make in Favour of the Pastimes under Consideration, I think it is plain to an impartial Enquirer after Truth, who is not blinded by the Love of these Vanities, that the Christian Doctrine runs in a very different Strain.

We are to grow in Grace and Virtue, to improve our Talents; we are to work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; to Watch and Pray; to edify and build up one another in our Holy Faith, and to give all Diligence in Christian Improvements; to be Holy in all manner of Conversation; to be as Lights in the World; to abstain from all Appearance of Evil; to have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness; to bear much Fruit, and to turn away our Eyes
from

from beholding Vanity. *But he that followeth vain Persons is void of Understanding.* Prov. xii. 11. and many more such Exhortations the Holy Scriptures abound with. So that if we are Christians, these and such like are the Rules by which we ought to govern our whole Lives, lest we should be counted as foolish Virgins, and unprofitable Servants; for we should always bear in Mind what our LORD says, *Luke vi. 46. Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the Things which I say?*

And now, if we take a View of Musick and Dancing, I apprehend we shall find them much of the same Kind as the former.

The delighting in, and attending Balls, Assemblies, and such like, seems very manifestly opposite to Christian Improvements, and is a vain wasting of Time which ought to be better employed, as it is not free from corrupting Youth and others; it leads them from useful Duties, and tends to fill their Minds with Lightness and Folly; and many Times has other bad Consequences, as well as the Things before considered, and is therefore a Part of the broad Way that the World travels in, which I judge ought to be avoided by Christians professing Godliness, for it is condemned by divers Parts of the divine Records.

The good Man *Job* has given us a Specimen of the Vanities practised in his Day, where he says, *Job xxi. 11—15. They send forth their little ones like a Flock, and their Children dance; they take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoice at the Sound of the Organ. They spend their Days in Wealth, and in a Moment*

Moment go down to the Grave; therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him, and what Profit should we have if we pray unto him?

And we read in the Prophet *Amos*, chap. vi. 1. and ver. 4—7. *Wo to them that are at Ease in Zion, and trust in the Mountain of Samaria, which are named Chief of the Nations, to whom the House of Israel came; that lie upon Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and the Calves out of the Midst of the Stall: that chant to the Sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves Instruments of Musick like David; that drink Wine in Bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief Ointments; but they are not grieved for the Affliction of Joseph. Therefore now shall they go Captive with the first that go Captive, and the Banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.*

And we read in the Prophet *Isaiab*, chap. v. 11, 12. *Wo unto them that rise up early in the Morning, that they may follow strong Drink, that continue until Night, till Wine inflame them; and the Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine are in their Feasts; but they regard not the Work of the LORD, neither consider the Operations of his Hand, &c.*

Verse 14. *Therefore Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her Mouth without Measure; and their Glory, and their Multitude, and their Pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.*

Thus it appears how those jovial Associations are treated by the inspired Writers of the Old Testament,

Testament. But notwithstanding these Reproofs and Admonitions, many turn a deaf Ear to them, and plead, that it is useful to send their Children to be instructed in some of these polite Practices, to teach them a proper Behaviour, &c. But certainly it would be much more proper for many to teach and instruct their Children in that which may make them beneficial to themselves, and useful Members of human Society; to shine in Virtue, and not in Folly. Surely they may be taught a becoming Behaviour without doing it in the Ways of Vice and Folly, which may lead them wrong in the future Part of their Lives. And it were to be wished that we had more Schools managed by Persons of Sobriety and Virtue, such as would teach Youth the Duties of Religion and Virtue, and avoid teaching them Vanity and Folly: surely such Measures would be an eminent Means of reforming the Age.

But I do not mean that Children are not to be considered as Children; for St. Paul says, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. *When I was a Child I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, but when I became a Man, I put away childish Things*: and this we may also hope our Children and Servants will do, if they are not taught and encouraged in such Things as may grow into ruinous Habits; though doubtless there are many childish Actions and Exercises which Children cannot be abridg'd of, and which it is reasonable Parents, &c. should wink at.

But there is one Thing which I apprehend would be of great Use, and that is, to endeavour to keep them from playing at any Time for Money, because playing for Money may create in them an eager

eager Desire to use it in any Sorts of Games to a hurtful Degree, and is a Practice, against which we should endeavour to guard them: I apprehend a proper Method to keep them from it would be, to agree to allow them a small Matter of Money Monthly, or Quarterly, on Condition they never play for any Money; and a Part of their Allowance to be forfeited when at any Time they break their Contract, which may have a better Effect than severe Threatnings; and this may be done in some other Cases.

But on LORD'S Days, they ought to be denied their usual Exercises, and strictly attend the publick Worship, and to be taught to spend their LORD'S-Day Evenings in Reading, and hearing some Portions of Scripture, and other good Books; this will tend to make them sober and religious, and prevent their Running into bad Company, and so making the LORD'S-Day a Day of Vanity and Sin, spending it in unprofitable Visits, or falling in with the Plays and Pastimes which, to the Shame of a Christian Nation, is often seen to be the Practice of many in this corrupt Age, greatly to the Disgrace of such Masters and Parents, who not only suffer those under their Care and Government to do such Things, but also themselves do the like. Surely these Things are far from being what the Apostle means by being Holy in all Manner of Conversation; or being Examples of Virtue, and bringing up Youth in the Nurture and Admonition of the LORD.

Though Many may say, they do not allow themselves, or those under their Care to practise

Plays or Games on the LORD's-Day, yet how frequently do they make it a Day of Pleasure, and visiting their Acquaintance, and spend it in empty and worldly Discourse, and train up their Children and those under their Care in the same Ways also; and how common is it to see Publick-Houses thronged on the LORD's-Day, entertaining one another with idle Chat, and Worldly Discourse, foolish Jestings, and such like! which Day I apprehend, should be employed in solemn Prayer, and serious Meditation, as preparatory to the attending Divine Worship profitably; and the Evening Part thereof to be spent in Religious Exercises, and Godly Discourse, to the improving ourselves and those about us in the Knowledge of God, and those sacred Truths revealed in his Holy Word, that we may not at last be rejected as unprofitable Servants. In these Duties, and such like, I apprehend, is the Manner the LORD's-Day should be improved, and not in Vanity and Folly, as we see too many do. But to return to the former Part of the Argument.

Some may say, *David* used Musick and Dancing in the Worship of God; and why may not we and our Children? To this I reply, that as to the pompous Customs used by the Jews, they are not a Rule to Christians: their Ceremonies are abolished; and I think we may number them amongst *St. Paul's* weak and beggarly Elements, *Gal. iv. 9*: for we find no such Practices amongst the Christians, no not for 300 Years after Christ: no if the late Lord King's Account be just: He says, "As for Church Musick, for Organs and the like,

“those primitive Ages were wholly ignorant of them.” Part III. page 111.

Another Argument may be urged in Favour of Musick and Dancing from the Case of the Prodigal Son, that on his Return there was Musick and Dancing, *Luke xvi. 25.*

This was a Parable representing God's Readiness to receive returning Sinners; but that all the Circumstances of Parables and Allusions in them are to be taken for a Rule of Practice to us, will not follow; because then the Commendation of the unjust Steward will become a Licence for us to be unjust; *Luke xvi. 8.* And when our LORD is said to come as a Thief; it can only mean, that he will come at an unexpected Time, and not that he is a Thief and a Robber, neither are we to be such.

Let this serve as an Explanation to other Cases of the same Nature: But the Use of Musick and Dancing in their jovial Meetings was sufficiently condemned even in the Times of the Jews, as hath been shewed before. And I must say, I think these Vanities are opposite to Christian Gravity, and not suitable to the Christian, who, on the contrary, should be Spiritually minded, and renewed in the Spirit of his Mind. And of the same Nature seems to be the Learning and Singing vain Songs, and often using light and airy Tunes, and acting like Children, which too much discovers a vain Mind, quite unbecoming the Carriage of a sober Christian.

And now, after all that has been said, let us consider what Resemblance these jovial Meetings and Practices have with St. Paul's Revellings, *Gal. v. 21.* It is to be observed that in the Catalogue of Vices he has there enumerated, saying, that they which do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, Revelling is One of them. And let it be observed, that he says Revellings, and such like; which seems to include all such Practices that bear a Likeness to them.

And as to the Meaning of the Word Revel, or Revellings, we have it in divers of our *English* Dictionaries thus explained;

Mr. Cole says, It is Night Sports of Dancing, &c. Mr. B. Martin says it is Night Sports of Dancing, Masking, Comedies, and such like. Mr. N. Bailey says, Revels are Dancing, Masking, Dicing, acting Comedies, &c.

Mr. Wilson, in his Scripture Dictionary says, "Revelling signifies Excess in Belly-Cheer, in riotous Feasts, and because (says he) in such Feasts oftentimes there is Musick." And Mr. Lock, in his Annotations on *Galatians v. 21.* says, "Revellings were, amongst the Greeks, disorderly spending of the Night in Feasting, with a licentious Indulging to Wine, good Cheer, Musick, Dancing, &c."

Now I must leave the Christian Reader to consider, whether these jovial Meetings have not such a Resemblance of St. Paul's Revellings as to make a sincere

a sincere Christian afraid of them. If it does not, I must say, I think he is a hardy Christian.

But let it be remembered that we are to follow the Example of our LORD, as we read in 1 John iii. 6. *He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.* And I dare say our LORD was never seen at Cards, nor Bowls, nor any such like Plays. Neither doth it appear that the Apostles of our LORD were found practising any of these Vanities. And St. Paul says, *Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an Example.* Phil. iii. 17.

Thus are all Christians to follow the Example of their Great LORD and MASTER, and his inspired Apostles; and should not the Ministers of the Gospel go foremost in Sobriety and Virtue, and be an Example to their People, according to the Directions of St. Paul to Timothy, in his 1st Epistle, iv. 12. where he says, *Let no Man despise thy Youth, but be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.* It is here to be observed, this Counsel was given to a Minister of the Gospel that was but a young Man for Age. Therefore Ministers, let them be Young or Old, are to have a high Regard to be good Examples, and to watch over their Flocks, and as wise Stewards, to give them their Portion of Meat in due Season. Blessed is that Servant, (says our LORD) whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing, Luke xii. 42, 43. Neither as being Lords over God's Heritage, but being Ensamples to the Flock; as St. Peter teaches in his 1st Epistle, v. 3.

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Doth it not therefore highly become all Ministers of the Gospel to be far from acting in any wise, unbecoming their Character, by giving any Countenance by Word or Example, to the Games, Plays, or Vanities of the Age, which so manifestly are the Broad-Way of the World, and lead many to Ruin both of Body and Soul: but rather to act after the Example of the Apostle, Col. i. 28, 29. where he says, *Whom we preach, warning every Man, and teaching every Man in all Wisdom, that we may present every Man perfect in Christ Jesus; whereunto I also labour, striving according to his Working, which worketh in me mightily.*

Thus are all Christians to follow the Example of their Great Lord and Master, and his inspired Apostles, and should not the Ministers of the Gospel go foremost in Sobriety and Virtue, and be an Example to their People, according to the Directions of St. Paul to Timothy, in his 1st Epistle, iv. 12. where he says, *Let no Man despise thy Youth: but be thou an Example of good Works, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Faith, in Purity.* It is here to be observed, that this Counsel was given to a Minister of the Gospel that was but a young Man for Age, and therefore Ministers, let them be Young or Old, are to have a high regard to be good Examples, and to watch over their Words, and at wise discretion, to give them their Portion of Meat in due season. Blessed is that Minister, (says our Lord) when his Lord shall be content to have him so. Luke xii. 48. With us, we have our dear Heavenly Father, who is the Father of the Poor, and he teaches in his 1st Epistle,

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The first Text which I shall take under Con-

AND I judge it will be allowed, that all well-ordered Societies must have proper Laws and Regulations for their Government, and that such Laws are to be the Rules by which the Society is to be governed; and that such as disobey those Laws are to be judged and censured according to the Tenor of them, that the due Order and Honour of the Society may thereby be maintained; and this must likewise be the Case of the Christian Church, which has Laws appointed in the Gospel that are to be the Rules whereby it is to be governed, both for the Honour and Welfare of such Christian Societies. And when any of its Members act contrary to those Laws and Rules, they are to be judged and censured according to the Tenor of such its Laws; that the due Order, Credit, and Honour of the Church and its Members may be maintained.

This leads me therefore to consider, what Directions we have in the Christian Law in Relation

to those that disobey it; but more particularly in Relation to such as follow the Vanities before considered.

The first Text which I shall take under Consideration is St. Pauls Direction to the Thessalonian Christians, 2 Theff. iii. 6. *Now we command you Brethren, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us.* It may here be enquired who are to be esteemed disorderly Walkers by the Gospel Rule? And doubtless, all wicked and profane Persons, Drunkards, Whore-mongers, Adulterers, and such like, are to be esteemed disorderly Walkers.

But is it only such vile, wicked, profane Persons that are to be withdrawn from? By this Text the Christian Church is commanded to withdraw from every Brother that walketh disorderly, in the most solemn Manner, even in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ; a very solemn Command indeed! And we have an Account what this disorderly walking was, particularly in ver. 1. *For we hear that there are some which walk amongst you disorderly, working not at all, but are Busy-Bodies.*

Here we see, Persons for a Crime not so profane as those noted in Gal. v. 19. are to be withdrawn from; and ver. 14. of the Chapter first named, St. Paul says, *And if any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

And

And in 1 Cor. v. 11 amongst other Sinners are mentioned *cardeous Persons, Railers, and Extortioners*; which are Part of those Crimes for which a Man is to be withdrawn from. *Wish sub uno*, (says the Apostle,) *do not to eat*; which if not meant of common Eating, surely it must be understood, not to eat with such an one at the Lord's Table.

And Rom. xvi. 17. St. Paul says, *Now I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them*. And in the Number of those disorderly Persons who will be excluded from the Kingdom of God, *Evil Persons and Revilers* are mentioned, 1 Cor. vi. 10.

We learn also from our Lord's own Words, that in Case of Trespasses between Brother and Brother, *Matthew vi. 16* if the Charge be allowed just by the Church, and he refuses to submit, he is to be *equated to an Heathen, a Man, and a Publican*. So that there are other Disorders, for which Persons are to be withdrawn from, besides those of the most criminal Nature.

But it doth not appear plainly, that in all these Cases the Church should proceed to formal Excommunication, according to what the Apostle directs as in the Case of the incestuous Corinthian, 1 Cor. v. 1. but if they are to abstain from the Company of Persons that walk disorderly, not to eat with them, but to withdraw from them, I think they must be suspended from the Communion of the Church, till they give Manifestation of

of their Reformation: However, I shall consider farther of these Things hereafter. In the mean Time, I think it cannot be denied, but that these Vanities of Games and Plays are the Broad Way of the World; and tend to the Corruption and Ruin of those that follow them: they are very opposite to a diligent Improvement in Christian Knowledge and Virtue, and therefore not to be encouraged by Word or Example; for as we are to shine as Lights in the World; that God may be glorified, and to abstain from all Appearance of Evil, 1 Thess. v. 22. I think it must naturally follow, that all professed Christians should avoid in every Degree those Vanities, lest their own Families, and others also by their Example, or allowance of them, should be encouraged to indulge themselves in such pernicious Practices to their utter Ruin; and if Christians should be the Means or Instruments of ruining any one Soul, surely it would be a dreadful Thing for them to think of. Though none seems more likely to be ruined by their Example than their own Children, for whom they should have the most tender Regard, and for whom they should exert their utmost Endeavours to bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, Eph. vi. 4. They should also consider, that it is often seen in many Families, that Children brought up in Vanity and Folly, become severe Scoundrels to their unwise Tutors. And I dare say, we may have seen whole Families come to Ruin, by being allowed or indulged in those Follies in their Youth. In the Company of Persons that walk dishonestly, I can with them, but to withdraw from them. If therefore any conscientious Christian should refuse to have Communion with such as use and give Countenance

Countenance to these Vanities, and endeavour to defend them, he seeing the pernicious Consequences of them, and being fully persuaded that their acting in these Vanities, or giving Encouragement to them, is very opposite to the Doctrine of the Gospel, which teaches a very different Way of improving our Time, by working out our own Salvation with all Diligence, and with Fear and Trembling, if he think himself justified in so doing by the Christian Law in general, but more particularly from St. Paul's Words, *Rom. xvi. 17. Now I beseech you Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them;* is he to be blamed? as he cannot without Grief and Trouble of Mind sit down in Communion with those, that at other Times practise, and are seen attending and accompanying with and amongst such Vanities, remembering that St. Peter says, *2 Pet. iii. 11. What manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness;* and that St. Paul says, *1 Thess. v. 22. Abstain from all Appearance of Evil.*

I say is a conscientious Christian to be blamed, that thinks in point of Conscience, it is not fit so to do? Has he not a Right to act according to his Conscience? Surely this cannot be denied; and if One may use this Christian Liberty, then it will follow, that Two may, and why not Ten or more?

And if a Minister should have the same Scruple, has he not the same Right as another Member? Nay, is he not obliged by his sacred Charge to bear a faithful Testimony against such Evils? I could

with every Member of a Christian Church would forbear giving any such Occasions of Offence, which he may so easily do. But if on the contrary they will persist in those Vanities, though to the Grief of their Brethren, and if such Minister or Member finds, and is firmly persuaded, that he cannot with a good Conscience communicate at the Lord's Table with those who give into such Vices except they reform, is he to be blamed if he withdraw from them? And what other Remedy can be found in such a Case? Indeed if those who delight in Plays and Sports be grown so numerous in a Church that they can choose a Minister of their own Way of thinking, then indeed they may go on without regarding such scrupulous, conscientious Members absenting themselves from them, and sit down and Eat and Drink, and rise up and play together, and then all such Differences will cease amongst those thus minded. Then it will be, *Like People, like Priest*, Hosea iv. 9. Then they may go on and play amongst the frolicksome Youths, and continue their Card-playing, Bowls, Cricket-matches, Cock-fighting, Horse-racing, Bull-baiting, Wrestling, Dancing-Meetings, and attend Revels, where such Things are commonly practised, as hath been shewed; and attend Mountebanks, and all such like Stage-playing, and Games, and Puppet-shews; go to Plays, and Operas, and hear their vain Songs, and smutty Language, and profane Ridicules of the Holy Scriptures and Religion too, as noted largely by Mr. *Jer. Collier*, M. A.

And if they may join in all such Diversions, why not play and act amongst them too, if there

is no Harm in it? And so go on in a more merry Way than those scrupulous Persons that oppose them dare do, and plead Solomon's Words for it, Eccles. iii. 1. To every Thing there is a Season, and a Time to every Purpose under the Heavens.

They may also encourage themselves with these Words of his, Eccles. xi. 9. Rejoice O young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer Thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes; (but what is the Result of all at last?) but know Thou that for all these Things God will bring Thee into Judgment.

And can the Professors of the Pure and Holy Christian Religion give any the least Countenance to those Vanities? They all hang together; for One likes one Sort, and Others some other Sorts of them? and who can be the Reprover, if he bears any Part in them? for the Reproved will say, What is mine worse than yours? So One will follow one Sort, and Others another Sort of Gaming; and so all may be practised by one or other without Restraint: But I think we may say, We have not so learned CHRIST.

But what can the conscientious Christian do, that cannot in Conscience join in Communion with those that plead for, and give Countenance to these Vanities? He may indeed plead with them to root out of their Hearts a Desire after these Things, that they may shine as Lights in the World by the contrary Virtues; and remind them, that the least Countenance given to these Vices may issue like

St. Paul's Observation, Gal. v. 9: *A little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump.*

But if those Persons will still persist in such Practices, and value their Games and Plays more than the Peace of the Church, and the good Order of it, (this may indeed increase the Other's Dislike to them, but not remove it,) what then can be done under those Circumstances, but to absent from Communion with them? and find out some Method to have Communion with a Minister and People that disallow these Vanities, (and to join themselves with some other Church regularly constituted, 'till those Players are brought to a Sense of the Evil, and reform their Practice.) For is it reasonable that conscientious Christians should live in the Neglect of One of the great Ordinances of the Gospel? which otherwise they must do, or else act contrary to their Conscience. And I verily think, None will be blamed at the great and awful Day of Account, for their conscientiously opposing those Vanities, though they should be but a little Flock.

But some may say, Is not this making Rents and Divisions in the Church?

To which I answer, If it doth make a Division, it is no other than what the Apostle St. Paul directs to, by withdrawing from every Brother that walks disorderly, 2 Thess. iii. 6. And it must be allowed, that the Design of our Lord in and by the Gospel was, to gather and constitute a Body or Church, separate from a disobedient, or vain and wicked World; and according to the Direction which we have

have in the Gospel, this Body is to maintain a due Separation from such as walk disorderly, and to continue separating disorderly Walkers from them: And if this be called Renting a Christian Church, it seems only as was before observed, to be making such Rents as the Christian Law directs to, in withdrawing from the Disorderly.

But then it will perhaps be asked, 'Are those Plays and Games under Consideration disorderly Walking in a Scripture Sense?' To which it may be replied, That the ruinous and sinful Nature of those Plays and Games which are followed in our Day, hath been already set forth in this Treatise.

Now can it be denied that they are the Broad Way of the World, and have been the Ruin of many a Town and Country; and against which we have good Laws made for that very Reason? Can Christians therefore question whether acting in and amongst them be disorderly Walking? And considering that they are so very opposite to the Christian Doctrine of Growing and Improving, and that with all Diligence in Christian Knowledge and Virtue, One would think None could question those Things being disorderly Walking, as we see them used in the World; and that it becomes all serious Christians to keep at the greatest Distance from them; or how can they be said to abstain from all Appearance of Evil?

But then how are we to judge what is to be esteemed disorderly?

This

This I apprehend must be by the Christian Law, and the Reason of Things.

But who is to judge in this Affair?

I apprehend the Church, from the best Light they can gather from the Christian Law, and the Reason of Things.

For by what other Rules can any Body of Christians act in Relation to Discipline, or in their dissenting from any other Body of Christians, but by making the best Judgment they can from Scripture and Reason? and by which it appears to them, that the Practices of some Persons, and the Principles of certain Bodies of Christians are contrary to what they believe to be right by these Rules.

For was it not by these Rules our established Church dissented from the Church of Rome? And is it not by these Rules that other Bodies of Christians act? or should act, in dissenting one from another? And I conceive, it is by these Rules only, that any Body of Christians can determine about the Worthiness, or Unworthiness of their Members.

And doth not our Lord refer the final Determination of Trespasses between Brother and Brother to the Church, in case Offences should arise? Read Matt. xviii. 17. where he says, Tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen Man and a Publican.

Was not this the Method the Church of *Antioch* took, by applying to the Church at *Jerusalem*? *Acts xv. 6. The Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this Matter*; and when the Affair had been debated, and determined, we read, *ver. 22. Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen Men of their own Company to Antioch, with their Determination.*

And about the Affair of Disorderly Persons, *St. Paul* writes to the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor. v. 12. Do not ye judge them that are within? but them that are without God judgeth.* By which I understand, that they were to judge and determine about disorderly Persons that were within the Church; but those that were without, or not within the Church, are to be left to God to judge; by which I think it is plain, the Church was to judge disorderly Persons amongst themselves; *For the Tree is to be known by its Fruits*, as our LORD has taught.

But I apprehend, that all suitable Measures should be taken, before Cases are brought to the Church for their Determination. First tell the Trespasser his Fault; then take One or Two more; and if that fail, then tell it unto the Church.

And in another Case, as we read, *Titus iii. 10.* the Offender is to be admonished, and a First and Second Admonition is to be used; and some are to be reprov'd, and rebuked, and exhorted, with all reasonable Long-Suffering and Doctrine.

For we should endeavour to *restore Offenders in the Spirit of Meekness*, *Gal. vi. 1.* and to be ready to
 E
 forgive,

forgive, on Gospel Terms. But if none of these Means will take Effect, where Disorders are plain and apparent, what is to be done, but to note them; to avoid them; and not to Eat with them; and, as the Case may be, to withdraw from them that walk disorderly.

But if the Church is not to act and determine in these Affairs according to the Rules before mentioned, it seems then we have Laws, but no Method to put them in Execution.

And as it appears to me, that a Church or Body of Christians must judge from the aforesaid Rules, on what Principles they are to form their Body or Church, so by the same Rules must they judge of Disorders, and disorderly Walkers.

But as a Church and Body of Christians are to act, in forming themselves in the Fear of God, and in the best Manner they can judge to be agreeable to His Word, so likewise must they act in the Affair of Discipline; with great Caution, and without Partiality, yet making a reasonable Difference, as Cases and Circumstances may appear; as St. Jude directs, ver. 22, 23d. of his Epistle; *And of some have Compassion, making a Difference: Others save with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire; hating even the Garment spotted by the Flesh.* So I apprehend a Difference should be made, according to the Nature and Circumstance of Disorders, and so different Measures taken; as whether it has been committed through Ignorance, or was accidental, by being off from his Watch; for he that is once accidentally drunk, I apprehend, is not to be censured

censured as a common Drunkard, he being far from justifying himself, but readily acknowledging his Fault, ought to be treated in a more favourable Manner than others who are obstinate, and justify themselves, and will not be reclaimed by all reasonable Persuasions. From which, and divers other Circumstances, the Church in the Fear of God, and the best Light they can gather from his Word, are to judge; otherwise all Church Discipline and Order must be given up. But if a Church should err in their Duty, and deviate from the Christian Law, in conniving at the Guilty, or in censuring the Innocent, which I doubt not but hath sometimes been the case; if so, hath not one Member or more a Right to remonstrate against the Guilty, and bear Testimony for the Innocent? And if they cannot rectify their Error, if it be a Matter of real Conscience, have not they, or even a single Person a Right to withdraw himself from their Communion, and say with the good Man *Jeshua*, *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord*; which was against the whole House of Israel.

And St. Paul also opposed the *Galatian Church*: And we read that the Church of *Sardis* had a Name to live, but was dead; *Rev. iii. 1.* yet there were a few Names that had not defiled their Garments, and of those our LORD said, *They shall walk with me in White.*

It was also said to the Church of *Ephesus*, *Rev. ii. 2.* *I know thy Works, and thy Labour, and thy Patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are Evil, and thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles and are not, and hast found them Liars; yet*

in ver. 4. they were blamed; so that I apprehend, it was only the Faithful amongst them that could not bear them which were Evil, though they might be Few in Number. And if this should be the case, have not the Few a Right to oppose them that err from the Truth? or to withdraw from them if they persist in their Errors? otherwise do not they bear with them to a Fault? And is it not reasonable they should act according to their Conscience, if they believe they ought so to do?

Yet I apprehend, Members ought not to oppose the Church in Matters merely indifferent, when it is not a Matter of real Conscience; remembering that they, as well as the Church, are to account before their Great LORD and MASTER, in relation to the Justice of their Cause and Proceedings.

But it may be asked, 'Have we any President that any were withdrawn from, or denied Communion for following such Games and Plays of the World?'

To which it may be said, Neither have we any President for withdrawing from Persons for divers of the Disorders mentioned in the Epistles of St. Paul; but as the Apostle deems them Sinners, and excludes them the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. will any one deny that they are to be denied the Communion of the Church for want of a President? So if these Games and Plays tend to Corruption and Ruin, and are Transgressions of the Law of God, as I judge hath been sufficiently shewn, since they lead many to be unprofitable Servants, and to be worse than

than Infidels, 1 Tim. v 8. do they not then come under the Discipline and Censure of the Church as disorderly Walkers, though we have no more a President than for the aforefaid Disorders? neither have we any President to exclude a common profane Swearer.

It may not be amiss here to insert a Passage out of *Cyprian*, who lived about the Middle of the Third Century, to shew the Opinion of that Age, which is as follows;

CYPRIAN'S Second EPISTLE,

Oxford Edition, Done into ENGLISH

by *Nath. Marshall, L. L. B.*

M DCC XVII.

CYPRIAN to his Brother EUCHRATIUS

Sendeth Greeting;

“ **Y**OU have been pleased, my dear Brother,
 “ agreeably to that mutual Affection and
 “ Regard which we bear each other, to consult
 “ me upon the Case of a certain Player, who is
 “ settled amongst you, and still perseveres in his
 “ scandalous Profession of ruining rather than in-
 “ structing Youth, and of communicating to others
 “ that pernicious Skill which he hath himself un-
 “ happily acquired; and You have asked my Opi-
 “ nion, whether such a Person should be admitted
 “ to the Communion of the Church.

“ My Answer is, that I conceive it dishonourable
 “ to the Majesty of God, and a Reflection upon
 “ the

"the Discipline of his Holy Religion, that the
 "Sanctity of his Church should be profaned, and
 "her Character blemished, by suffering the In-
 "fection of so foul a Guilt to come near her."

Now *Cyprian* was not only a renowned Bishop of *Carthage*, but likewise had a Precedency over other Churches; for in his 81st Epistle he says, "I who am in some Sense a Bishop of more Churches than One,"

And in his 48th Epistle he says, "My Province is of a very wide Extent; it hath *Numidia*, and the two *Mauritanias* joining to it," which I find by geographical Writers, comprehends a large Region of *Africa*; from which it seems likely, these Plays were not allowed in those Churches in *Cyprian's* Province.

Note, *Cyprian* calls it a scandalous Profession.

And in the Notes on this Second Epistle it is said, "So *Tertullian*, in *Lib. de Spectaculis*, chap. 22, hath emphatically called it."

Now *Tertullian* was of *Carthage*, a renowned Father and Christian Writer, who lived above 100 Years before *Cyprian*; which seems to shew the Opinion of the Church in his Age likewise.

But let it not be thought, these are the only Passages that can be quoted from the early Fathers of the Church; the contrary will be most evident to any one who will read Mr *Prynne's Histrio Mastix*, who, from Page 843 to 845, and Page 133, 134 hath

hath shewed, that Plays and Players were called infamous, and held in great Contempt; and those who gave into such Things were excluded the Christian Church, and from Baptism, and even the Society of Christians, &c. which he proves from *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Clemens*, *Romanus*, *Chrysostom*, and divers others of the early Fathers, &c.

He entitles his Book, "*HISTORIO MASTIX*;
 " The *Players* Scourge, or *Actors* Tragedy, divided
 " into Two Parts; wherein it is largely evidenced,
 " by divers Arguments, by the concurring Autho-
 " rities and Resolutions of sundry Texts of Scrip-
 " ture, of the whole Primitive Church, both un-
 " der the Law and Gospel, of 55 Synods and
 " Councils, of 71 Fathers and Christian Writers,
 " before the Year of our LORD 1200; of above
 " 150 foreign and domestic Protestant and Popish
 " Authors since, of 40 heathen Philosophers, His-
 " torians, Poets; of many heathen, many Christian
 " Nations, Republicks, Emperors, Princes, Ma-
 " gistrates; of sundry Apostolical, Canonical,
 " Imperial Constitutions, and of our own *English*
 " Statutes, Magistrates, Universities, Writers,
 " Preachers:" (And he farther says of those
 " Plays,) " If we believe the Fathers, are sinful,
 " heathenish, lewd, ungodly Spectacles, and most
 " pernicious Corruptions, condemned in all Ages,
 " as intolerable Mischiefs to Churches, to Repub-
 " lics, to the Manners, Minds, and Souls of
 " Men, &c." Thus far from his Title Page.

These he hath largely made use of as a Cloud
 of Witnesses against Plays, and Players, as most
 pernicious Corruptions, condemned in all Ages as
 intolerable

intolerable Mischiefs to Churches, to Republicks;
to the Manners, Minds, and Souls of Men.

Though Mr. *Prynne's* Design in his *Histrio Mastix* is principally against Stage-Plays, and the great Evil that hath attended it in almost all Ages, to the promoting of Vanity, Sin, and the Ruin of those that follow it, both of Body and Soul; yet he hath likewise furnished us with many solid Arguments of his own, as well as great Numbers of Authors, that have severely condemned divers other vain, corrupting Follies and Pastimes, that are too commonly practised by, and amongst many that call themselves Christians.

As for Instance, against vain Songs, Musick and Dancing, and the bad, pernicious, and corrupting Consequences that attend them; this he confirms by great Numbers of Authors both ancient and modern, as may be read in the aforecited Book, in Page 263 to 277, and 287 to 290, and 573, 637, and 692.

And he has quoted many Authors both ancient and modern, that shew the bad Effects of Dancing, &c. and that it is evil in its Consequences, and of an evil Report, &c. for which see Page 221 to 226, and 236, and 275 to 279, and 283, and 636.

And in Page 232 we have these Words of his;
" I would the dancing Wanton, &c. who spend
" their Strength, their Time, especially the *Easter*,
" *Whitsun*, *Midsummer*, and *Christmas* Season, in
" lewd, lascivious Dancing, would now seriously
" consider, and this would teach them, not only to
" abandon

“ abandon all such Dancing themselves, but like-
 “ wise to withdraw their Children, especially their
 “ Daughters from the Dancing School, as St.
 “ *Ambrose* long since advised all holy Women, all
 “ godly Parents for to do, admonishing them to
 “ teach their Daughters Religion, not Dancing.”

And he has produced many other Authorities, condemning Dice-playing, Tables, and Card-playing, and other unlawful Games, &c. and that Ministers of the Gospel are forbid these Things, and likewise Dancing; and in a particular Manner not to act themselves, or to be present where others act them; for which see Page 625, 627, 655, and 666, 688 to 693; and in Page 491 to 497 he hath shewed from our own Laws, that Stage-Plays have been severely condemned, and says, Page 496, “ So that now at this Day, by
 “ these several Acts of Parliament yet in Force,
 “ (resolved and concluded upon after long, mature
 “ Deliberation by our whole State and Kingdom,)
 “ all common Stage Plays are solemnly adjudged to
 “ be unlawful and pernicious Exercises, not suffer-
 “ able in our State.”

And in particular says, in Page 497, “ It is
 “ most apparently evident then by all these Premi-
 “ ses, that not only Pagan Writers, Emperors,
 “ States, and Magistrates, together with the pri-
 “ mitive Christians, Fathers, and Christian Wri-
 “ ters of foreign Parts; but even our own domestic
 “ Writers, Preachers, Universities, Magistrates,
 “ and our whole State itself in open Parliament,
 “ both in ancient, modern, and present Times,
 “ have abandoned, censured, and condemned

“ Stage-Plays and common Actors as the very
 “ Pests, the Corruptions of Mens Minds and
 “ Manners, the Seminaries of all Vice, all Lewd-
 “ ness, Wickedness and Disorder, and intolerable
 “ Mischiefs in any civil or well-disciplined Com-
 “ monweale.” These Conclusions he draws from
 what he has here, and in many Pages before said.

I have here made some short References to some
 of the many Passages contained in Mr *Prynne's*
 elaborate Book, as pertinent to the Design of my
 Treatise; which said Book, though a Quarto
 Volume of upwards of 1000 Pages, yet is but
 an Abridgment of the vast Variety of Testimonies
 that have (as he hath shewn) appeared from Ages
 and Generations down to the Time of the publish-
 ing his Book (which was in the Year of our LORD
 1633) against the Plays, Games, and Vanities of
 the World; and he hath largely shewn, that they
 have always been the Spring, Fountain, and Nur-
 series of Vice, Debauchery, and Wickedness of
 almost every kind, which will more abundantly
 appear to any one that will read the whole Book.
 I have endeavoured to make these References, as
 well as my whole Proceedure short, because it should
 reach those, (as well as others in general,) which
 seem willing rather to spend their Time and Money
 in a profuse Manner on Pleasures and Pastimes,
 than buy or read a large Book, be it ever so good;
 the more the Pity.

I think it must be allowed, that those Arguments
 and Authorities cited from this learned Author,
 adds a considerable additional Weight to my fore-
 going Arguments against the Plays, Games, and
 Vices

Vices of a degenerate World, which if not sufficient to produce a general Reformation, yet one would expect it should be sufficient to convince Christian Professors, that they ought to lay aside these Things with Abhorrence, if they have any Hope to be Partakers of the Blessings of the Gospel, which assures us, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, and that they are to *abstain from all Appearance of Evil*. But if notwithstanding all these Evidences, produced from Scripture and self-evident Principles of Reason, and the Opinion of the sober Part of Mankind throughout Ages past, as asserted by Mr *Prynne* and others, confirmed by more than 310 Authorities, they will yet venture to meddle with, or give Countenance to those Vices, I must once more say, I think they are hardy Christians.

But some may say, * It is too severe to exclude Members from the Communion of the Church * for their using these Games and Plays of the Age.*

If this Objection be allowed, and that no Persons are to be excluded the Communion of the Church for any of those Practices, then it will follow that Persons may continue in them, to the beggaring of their Families, and to the Neglect of Christian Duties; and Servants also may use them to the Neglect of their Masters Business, and keep disorderly Hours, by attending Pastimes, Revels, Banquetings, Plays, Operas, and such like, and yet be allowed to be Communicants with the Church; if so, wherein will the Church differ from the World, let any serious Christian judge,

Now is it not manifest from hence, that these things fall under the Censure of the Church? and I think Practices which tend to such bad Ends are to be taken Notice of by the Church, suitable to the Degree of them, by Persuasions, Admonitions, Exhortations, Rebukes: and if persisted in, as the Case may require, are to be censured, and suspended Communion, and in flagrant Cases to be excluded the Church.

And these Measures I apprehend should be taken by the Christian Church in Relation to their Members in general that walk disorderly, first endeavouring to convince and reclaim them, if possible, by the most gentle Measures, agreeable to the Counsel St. Paul gives, *Gal. vi. 1.* where he says, *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an One in the Spirit of Meekness.*

But if such Measures fail, then I apprehend, farther Steps are to be taken, according to the Nature of the Case, as hath been before considered.

And as to what is to be esteemed disorderly Walking, I apprehend is, when Members act apparently contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel, and the Teaching of the Apostles; for St. Paul says, *1 Cor. xiv. 37.* *If any Man think himself to be a Prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, that the Things that I write unto you are the Commandments of the Lord.*

And St. John says in his 1st Epistle, *iv. 6.* *We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is*

is not of God beareth not us. And St. Paul says, 2 Thess. iii. 14. *If any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed.* And very remarkable are these Words in the sixth Verse of this Chapter, where he says, *Now we command you, Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us.* So that they which act plainly contrary to these Laws and Rules, I apprehend, are to be esteemed disorderly, and that the Church is to act towards them according to the Rules before set forth: That is, the Church are, in the Fear of God, according to the best Light they can gather from his Word and Reason, to judge in Relation to such disorderly Walkers, not forgetting to make solemn Prayer to Almighty God for Direction in such weighty Undertakings.

And that if a Church omit using a suitable Discipline towards Offenders, that One or more of their Members that are conscientiously persuaded that they ought not to communicate with such disorderly Persons, have a Right to absent themselves, which is what I have argued for on these Heads. These Points I have briefly brought over again, that my Meaning might not be mistaken, and I apprehend they are sufficiently established in the foregoing Treatise.

The CONCLUSION.

NOW doth it not argue a great Defect in them that can take Pleasure in those Vanities and Follies, which so manifestly tend to the Corruption and Ruin of themselves and their Fellow-Christians, and that are so evidently opposite to the Doctrine of the Gospel, and the Nature of a Christian Spirit, which leads to a diligent Improvement in Knowledge and Virtue, and to *abstain from all Appearance of Evil*? Can these Things be the proper Fruits of a Soul regenerated and renewed from above? Surely those Desires and Practices must arise from a very different Principle.

Can any One think, he acts the Part of a Christian truly renewed in the Spirit of his Mind, when he is an Encourager of those ruinous Vanities and Follies, which tend to corrupt his Fellow Creatures, and lead them in the broad-Way of the World?

Surely the true Spirit of a Christian will lead him to be an Example in Virtue and Spiritual Improvements, and to *shine as a Light in the World, that Others by his good Example may be led to glorify God, and bear much Fruit*, and thereby encourage them to labour after a Spiritual Mind, which may prepare them for uniting with the heavenly Hosts above, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and not to trifle away their Time in Childish Plays, and wanton Vanities. These Things may go down with those that rest in a mere Form of Religion,
but

but I think not with a truly spiritually minded Christian, whose great Business is to set his Affections on Things that are above.

Let it be remembered, a Christian Life is not a Life of Vanity and worldly Pleasures, but a Life of Self-denial, of Sobriety, and Watchfulness against Sin and Folly, lest Vanity and worldly Pleasures should marr and hinder the good Seed of the Word taking Root in the Heart to good Purpose, and so in the final Issue shew that he had only a Name to live, but was dead, and then what Advantage will the mere Name of a Christian be to him? Remember, It is a good End that crowns all: Therefore let the Caution our LORD has given us in the Parable of the Sower, make every One that bears the Name of a Christian watch against the Snares of a sensual World; which we have in *Luke viii. 14, 15. And that which fell among Thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth and are choaked with Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures of this Life, and bring no Fruit to Perfection; but that on the good Ground are they, which in an honest and good Heart having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience.*

Now if any Man should think from what has been said, that I make Christianity a narrow Way, let it be remembered our LORD has told us, *Matt. vii. 14. Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto Life, and Few there be that find it.* Therefore let it not be esteemed that I have made the Way narrow, by shewing from Scripture and Reason, how Christians ought thereby to regulate their Lives free from Vanity and Folly, for
I do

I do not propose any New Narrow Way, but to establish the good Old one, which had its Being long before we had ours; for though the Ways of Religion may appear with a dull Prospect to Persons that are Strangers to it, yet nevertheless, it hath its Pleasures, and great Ones too, for our LORD says, *Matt. xi. 30. My Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.* And Solomon says, *Prov. iii. 17. Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* And thus I apprehend it is to the Spiritually Minded Christian, to such as can say with the Psalmist, *Psalms xl. 8. I delight to do thy Will O God.* And in the cxix. 165, he says, *Great Peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.* The sincere, the diligent, and faithful Christian has Peace of Conscience, Peace with God, Peace in Life, and Peace at Death. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright, for the End of that Man is Peace, Psalm xxxvii. 37.* A Peace that the World cannot give, and knoweth but little of.

The Reason why Persons look on the Ways of Religion as a Course that will deprive them of all Pleasure and Happiness, seems to be, that by a customary Habit in the contrary Practices, their Minds and Desires run in a Channel quite opposite to it; but would they look back on their former State, they might see their Objects of Delight and Pleasure have been changed from one Sort to another in their Infant State; little Toys and Trifles were their Delight, and as they advanced in Years their Objects of Delight were changed; and when they arrived to the State of Manhood they have changed them again; yet they may be all of a carnal, sensual, worldly Nature, but this proves

proves that their Objects of Delight and Pleasure may be changed from one Sort to another. Now would they be so wise as to attempt One Change more, and make Religion, and the unspeakable Benefits thereof the Objects of their Delight, this would be the most happy Change of all, and would make them view it, and the Duties and Practices thereof in a very different Light, even with Pleasure and great Delight; and make them look on the Follies and Vanities of the World with great Contempt. Then these mighty Difficulties would be in a great Measure removed, and make them *delight in the Law of God after the inward Man*, Rom. vii. 22. And the Time spent in gaining Knowledge therein would become their highest Pleasure; and the Duties of Religion, and the happy Conversation with pious and good Men, and the blessed Hope they then would have before them, would make the vain Follies of the World lose their Influence on their Minds, and make them like the Eunuch, *Acts viii. 39. Go on their Way rejoicing.*

But to attempt such a Change is what Persons that have accustomed themselves to delight only in Worldly Pleasures, are exceeding backward to set about; yet the dreadful State those that knowingly neglect it are in makes it absolutely necessary; for we read, *Heb. xii. 14. we are to follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord.* And St. Paul says, *Rom. viii. 13. For if ye live after the Flesh ye shall die.* And our LORD says, *John iii. 3. Except a Man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God:* or as St. Paul words it, *Eph. iv. 23. And be renewed in the Spirit of your*

Mind. It evidently appears from the Doctrine of the Gospel, that in order so great and necessary a Change may be accomplished, they must truly repent of all their past Sins and Disobedience against the Laws of God. For it is said, *Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Thus it is written, and thus it becometh Christ to suffer, and to rise from the Dead the third Day, and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* And in *Heb. vi. 1. Repentance from dead Works* is One of the Beginning Foundation Principles of the Doctrine of CHRIST, and One of the great Doctrines that St. Paul declared to the Elders of *Ephesus*, that he had taught them publickly, and from House to House, was *Repentance toward God, Acts xx.* And our LORD said to the Jews, *Luke xiii. 3. Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* And *Acts xvii. 30.* we read, *And the Times of this Ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all Men every where to repent.*

And those who truly repent of their past Sins, must form a solemn Resolution, depending on Divine Grace for their Assistance to forsake them for the Future, and make the Laws of God the sole Rule of their Lives and Actions, through the whole Course thereof, otherwise how are they renewed in the Spirit of their Minds.

Their Resolutions, Lives and Actions must be changed agreeable to the Doctrines of the Gospel, which they are carefully to study, and be earnest and frequent in solemn Prayer to Almighty God, through, and in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, for his HOLY SPIRIT to assist them in
 40

so great a Work: By which Means, I apprehend, they will experience that the *Yoke of Christ is easy, and his Burthen light*. And when this Change is effectually wrought, I conceive they will no longer delight in the Vices and Follies of the World, but see it their Duty, as well as Desire, to forsake them.

And now let the sincere Christian be encouraged to a constant and diligent Improvement in all Christian Virtues, by St. Paul's Words to the *Corinthian Christians*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Therefore my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Thus have I finished what I proposed, and may God of his Infinite Goodness grant his Blessing.

F I N I S.



ERRATUM.

In Page 35, Line 24, Read, "Preachers, &c."

I have been thinking of you
very much lately and wondering
how you are getting on. I hope
you are well and happy. I have
not much news to write at present.

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